

Medical Students Against Interpersonal Violence – From Idea to Action

By Joan Tu

As our student organization heads into its third year of operation, we reflect back on our beginnings and the slow but steady steps we have taken as a medical student group.

In 2019, we started with a vision and a mission to promote and examine the role of medical students in addressing interpersonal violence as a medical and health issue through advocacy, education, and research. Our founding members identified our values, created an educational website and video, and organized our first meeting which brought medical students together with faculty and community organizations.

The 2020 team raised awareness through a series of lunch & learns. Highlights included a session on “COVID19 and Interpersonal Violence” and a successful fundraiser and donation drive with the Calgary Emergency Women’s Shelter, as well as a session on “Sexual Harassment and Violence within Medicine” with Dr. Susan Phillips of Queen’s University.

Leveraging digital media and tools have allowed us to connect with physicians and students across Canada. Addressing a sensitive topic is difficult, so working within one common umbrella can be beneficial. Our members have diverse clinical and research interests, but working together has allowed us to engage different perspectives and also promote continuity of this work within our profession on interpersonal violence.

Since the pandemic, some forms of interpersonal violence have decreased as a result of lockdowns, stay-at-home orders, and shifts to learning or working online. Nevertheless, intimate partner violence and violence towards healthcare workers are ongoing problems. For medical students, issues like discrimination, harassment, and mistreatment are still top of mind.

One reason for the success of Medical Students Against Interpersonal Violence at becoming established was having both a core group of members dedicated to planting roots *and* supportive administration, physicians, and faculty at the Cumming School of Medicine, University of Calgary. We thank those who have already supported us and made this work possible.